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ABSTRACT

In this book, the Kentucky novelist, poet, and teacher Jesse Stuart describes his experiences as student and teacher. Chapter 1 recounts the influence of his father, who instilled the principle of learning through play and the value of imagination and memory, and catalogs young Jesse's teachers at Plum Grove School. Chapter 2 describes his high school experiences, both educational and work. An inspirational teacher introduced him to poetry, which he began writing in his sophomore year. The third and fourth chapters chronicle his college years at Lincoln Memorial University (Tennessee). Stuart struggled to balance work against classes, his childhood farm life with his dream to be a college graduate. Much of chapter 4 is devoted to a teacher that encouraged him to write, Harry Kroll. Chapter 5 briefly tells of Stuart's teaching job at a high school and 2 years as principal of Greenup High School, then describes his experiences at Vanderbilt University, where he "found an English heaven." In the last half of the book, Stuart combines his experience as student, teacher, and administrator to formulate his philosophy of education. In chapter 6, he promotes discipline through hard work; describes a superintendency and principalship; and starts articulating the relationship between school, character, and society. Chapter 7 describes his stay in Europe and the theme of nature as a model classroom. Stuart's work as principal in turning the failing McKell High School into a successful one is recounted in chapter 8. Chapter 9 chronicles his year in Egypt, where he reexamined the relationship between a culture and its educational system; during the 1960s, he turned a critical eye upon that relationship in America. Chapter 10 presents Stuart's conclusions that teaching is spiritual and has to do with values and how people choose to live their lives. (TD)

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